



VA Information Resource Center

Data Issues Brief

June, 2001

1. HERC Inpatient Average Cost Databases Available

The Health Economics Resource Center (HERC) in Palo Alto recently announced the release of average cost inpatient datasets for FY98. There are three datasets for FY98: a discharge dataset (dischg98), an acute medical-surgical dataset (mdsrg98), and non medical-surgical dataset (nmdsrg98). These datasets are accessible to VA researchers with appropriate access (adding functional task code '110AC03' to your user Time Sharing Agreement via VA form 9957). A User's guide for these datasets is located on the HERC Web site: <http://www.herc.research.med.va.gov/ACM.htm>. HERC staff is currently working to create similar databases for the FY99 and FY00. For more information, visit the HERC Web site at: <http://www.herc.research.med.va.gov> or call them at (650) 617-2630.

2. External Peer Review Process (EPRP) Database

The Office of Quality and Performance (OQP) will be allowing researchers access to the External Peer Review Process (EPRP) database in the near future. The access policy to obtain EPRP data is being revised and should be ready for release within the next few weeks. The contact person for EPRP is Debby Walder, Performance Management Facilitator. Ms. Walder's e-mail address is: debby.walder@mail.va.gov.

3. DSS National Data Extracts Available

National data from the VHA Decision Support System (DSS) are available for FY99 and FY00 in SAS datasets at the Austin Automation Center. Discharge, treating specialty, and outpatient extracts have patient-level data on utilization and summary costs for categories of care: nursing, laboratory, pharmacy, radiology, and all other. Access to the extracts requires submission of an ACRS Time Sharing Request Form (VA 9957), an Agreement to Not Disclose DSS Data, and, if real SSN records are to be used, a completed VA Privacy Statement. Full information on obtaining access and copies of the required forms can be obtained from the VISN Support Services Center (VSSC) Web site: <http://klfmenu.med.va.gov>, or by calling Harriet Warren, VSSC Help Desk person for DSS, at 512-326-6758, 7A-4P EST Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

4. New HSR&D Service Resource Center Announced

In the May R&D Hotline call, Dr. John Demakis announced that Houston VAMC was the site of the newest HSR&D Resource Center. The Expedient Psychometric Education Research Team (XPERT) will aid investigators in identifying and selecting appropriate measurement tools for conducting health services research and program evaluation. The Resource Center will also develop a compendium of tested, valid research instruments and methods of measurement that are appropriate for use with veteran populations. Dr. Kimberly Wristers will be the Center Director. For more information contact the Houston Center for Quality of Care and Utilization Studies at (713) 794-7615.

5. “The Odyssey Continues” at the 2001 VA ITC

The largest annual training event for VA employees, the Information Technology Conference (ITC’01), is scheduled for August 6-10, 2001. Held at the Austin Convention Center in downtown Austin, Texas, this event “highlights the newest technologies and business strategies for veteran’s care and benefits administration from VA sites around the country.” Attendance is projected at 3,100 for the week-long event. There also will be nearly 200 exhibits on display in the Tech Expo Hall.

On-line conference registration opens in mid-June. Additional information about ITC’01 can be found at: <http://vaww.iconferences.aac.va.gov/ClientTC/home/>. Specific questions should be emailed to ITC Staff at vaitc@mail.va.gov or call (512) 326-6025.

EDITOR’S NOTE: DATA ISSUES BRIEF ARCHIVE AVAILABLE

Past issues of the monthly VIREC *Data Issues Briefs* are posted on the VIREC Web site at: <http://www.virec.research.med.va.gov>. Simply click on *Data Issues Briefs* under “Publications,” then click the year and month in which you have an interest.

Data Issues Briefs are developed by the staff of the VA Information Resource Center (VIREC) for the purpose of informing and updating VA researchers on current and pending happenings and changes regarding health data, databases, and medical informatics. *Data Issues Briefs* are produced on a monthly basis and are distributed through e-mail subscriptions. Previous releases are posted and available on the VIREC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.med.va.gov>. If you wish to receive future issues direct, please send an e-mail message to the VIREC at virec@research.hines.med.va.gov or call 708-202-2413. If you have any suggestions or comments about the *Data Issues Briefs*, please e-mail Diane C. Cowper, Editor, at cowper@research.hines.med.va.gov.